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SUBJECT: TANZANIA BY-ELECTION: CHIEFS OF MISSION SEE CALM IN TARIME

REFS: A) DAR ES SALAAM 635, B) FOX-LIDDLE e-mail dated 08OCT08

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY & INTRODUCTION: CDA and three heads of Diplomatic missions visited Tarime district to discuss the upcoming by-election with all concerned. The playing field is tilted towards the ruling CCM party, but not grossly so. Police presence is much greater than during the 2005 national elections. The police appear to have a pro-ruling party bias. However, the main opposition party in the district won its seat in parliament with 58 percent of the vote in ¶2005. Moreover, local ethnic Kurya people are well known for not being easily intimidated. It is likely to be a close race. END SUMMARY & INTRODUCTION.

Our Delegation & Who We Talked to:

¶2. (U) While we had hoped to arrange a more representative group of Heads of Mission, last minute dropouts left only the Canadian and British High Commissioners, the Swedish Ambassador and the American CDA. We spent 48 hours in the district (3-5 October).

¶3. (U) On the Government of Tanzania side, we met with the District Commissioner, Regional Commissioner, Returning Officer (senior National Electoral Commission official in the district), Commander of the Police Special Operations (Dar es Salaam-based) and the Police Officer Commanding District (senior local police official).

¶4. (U) We met with the Chadema parliamentary candidate and had a briefing from Chadema election officials (with media present). Chadema, the second largest opposition party nationally, is the largest party in the district, has a slim majority in the local district council and is defending the parliamentary seat (see ref a).

¶5. (U) We met with the CCM (national ruling party) parliamentary candidate, the CCM council candidate and a senior national-level CCM member (who is also a prominent local businessman and our hotelier).

¶6. (U) Finally, we met with 30-plus residents of a remote rural community who freely and vocally shared their views on the campaign and the issues that matter to them.

What We Learned:

¶7. (SBU) All our interlocutors referred to the incidents of violence over the past several weeks (stone throwing, provocative language and gestures, i.e. burning of campaign material, dressing a dog in a CCM T-shirt, etc.) but suggested that calm had now been restored. The evening following our departure violence escalated again. Police reportedly used tear gas to break up a throng of Chadema supporters and arrested the Chadema candidates, among others. They were later released on bail.

¶8. (SBU) All our interlocutors made reference to the underlying propensity to violence and inter-clan rivalry amongst the Kuria as a contributing factor. As noted in reftel and unanimously confirmed locally, the Kurya/Kuria clans feud over land, cattle, the marijuana trade and other grievances whether or not there is a political campaign afoot. The clans of the two major contestants are solidly behind their "sons," but the other clans are divided in their

sympathies. None of the Kuria will be easily intimidated.

¶9. (SBU) During our 48 hour visit, Tarime appeared calm. We saw no acts of violence. Many of our interlocutors commented on the increased police presence. The group of villagers we spoke with noted that they were uneasy when the police arrived in force. They questioned why they never see such police numbers when clan fighting breaks out or during the last national campaign. However, they went on to say that over time they became comfortable with the presence as they were largely left alone.

Issues:

¶10. (SBU) Chadema's main concern was their view that the police were not acting impartially and were quick to arrest and detain Chadema supporters and act on the complaints of the CCM but not on complaints filed by Chadema (see ref email attachment). "Our complaints are always 'under investigation' with no follow up," they lamented. A key concern was the alleged arrest and detention of two Chadema supporters who had been kidnapped, taken to the forest, beaten and stripped (allegedly by CCM supporters). On reporting to the police station, instead of being treated as victims, they were arrested and detained for the dog and t-shirt incident. They believed that no action was taken to arrest the perpetrators whom they had named. While we had no way of ascertaining the truth of these allegations, the perception of police neutrality will be an important element in maintaining peace throughout the election period. (All observers agreed as to the outline of the story, but CCM leaders insisted that the incident was Chadema-on-Chadema violence.) Chadema expressed concern that they had submitted written complaints on all incidents to date to the Returning Officer, with copies to NEC HQ, but had not yet received a response and were concerned that no action was being taken.

¶11. (SBU) Police advised that they were being criticized by both sides, but sought to reassure us that they were working fairly, impartially and in accordance with the law. In some cases police could make immediate arrests because they witnessed the offense. In

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other cases alleged offenses needed to be investigated. The local police commander told us that supporters of several parties, including CCM, had been arrested and charged for acts of violence but that everything had been brought under control.

¶12. (SBU) The Returning Officer and the police provided slightly different information on allegations of buying of voter registration cards. The Returning Officer advised that the allegations had been investigated and were determined to be unfounded, while the police told us they were still under investigation. The villagers told us that while all parties were attempting to buy voter registration cards, it was mainly CCM. We were impressed by the villagers' determination to use their right to vote even though they were critical of both CCM and Chadema for not delivering on their lavish campaign promises.

Comment: Worth the Trip; Likely to be a Close Race

¶13. (SBU) This trip garnered considerable positive broadcast and print coverage, including a political cartoon (in possession of AF/E/Tanzania desk). Our mission was accomplished. Tanzanian officials are aware that we are closely following events. They are also aware that several missions will send (NEC-accredited) observers to the district for the final day of the campaign and the election itself. Our visit was immediately preceded by and followed by violence, but our presence contributed to the calm that reigned in Tarime for 48 hours.

¶14. (SBU) The race in Tarime is likely to be close, notwithstanding a playing field tilted somewhat towards CCM. Although Chadema won 58 percent of the parliamentary vote in 2005 with the charismatic Chacha Wangwe, his would-be successor lacks charisma. Moreover, Chadema is fractured over suspicions that their late MP was done in by one of their own. Most of his family members have left the party. CCM, using its significant financial resources, is bringing the weight of its ministers and senior-most party leaders to bear on the district. Chadema's national leadership has campaigned locally, but has not maintained a long-term presence. However, CCM in Tarime is reportedly divided into two rival factions. One is backing the council and parliamentary candidates. The other is backing Chadema ("CCM by day, Chadema by night") as payback against their CCM rival.

